

Resumes

Whether you're a high-level professional, a student looking for a part-time job, or a homemaker returning to the job market, you need a resume. A resume is an advertisement of you. It is your primary sales tool to market yourself to an employer. Every job seeker in today's tight job market needs a resume.

Your first step is to list and organize your information: your education, employment history, skills, etc. Make sure the information is complete.

Next, do some research on resumes. Look at examples of resumes given on Web sites and in resume books. Some resources to help you are listed at the end of this article.

Now decide on what format you will use for your resume. No matter what format you decide to use, remember the best resume is one that is targeted to the job you are seeking. This requires that you update your resume for every job you apply for. Targeting your resume is a very powerful method to set yourself apart from the competition and capture the employer's interest.

There are three main formats for resumes: Chronological, Functional, and Combination.

The Chronological format's emphasis is placed on a chronological listing of employment and employment-related experience. This is a good format for those with a consistent employment history, with no gaps and whose past employment experiences are related to their current employment goals.

The Functional format highlights skills, experience and accomplishments without identifying specific dates, names and places.

Employment history is de-emphasized by placing it near the bottom of the resume. This format works well for those changing careers or those who are new graduates. However, many hiring authorities do not like this format, as it is generally believed it is used to hide something.

The Combination format brings together both the Chronological and the Functional resumes. This format begins with a summary of your most impressive qualifications, skills, abilities and accomplishments. It is followed by an employment history and education section that supports the statements made in the top portion.

Remember whatever format you choose, an employer will only spend 10-15 seconds reviewing your resume to determine whether or not to call you in for an interview. Because so little time is spent on the initial review of your resume, you will need to focus on making your resume reader-friendly, easily scanned by the human eye and highlight the most important information first.



Resume Layout

It is important to make your resume unique. No one layout fits everyone. Depending on the employer or the job, different things may be expected. Do your research so that you will be comfortable with your resume.

Most resumes have these standard parts:

Personal Data –

Your name, complete mailing address, telephone number (and/or cell phone number if you have one) with area code (make sure your answering machine message is professional), and email address. Your email address must also be professional. If you do not have an email address, get one. In today's technology-savvy world, you will look behind-the-times if you do not have one. Put all of this information in block format (versus all on one line) at the top of your resume.

Employment or Career Objective –

This is known by many different names and it is not always used or mandatory. If you choose to omit it, you can include it in the cover letter. The best objective statement does not list what you want from the employer. Instead, it lists what you will bring to the company. It is a brief statement summarizing your best accomplishments, skills, education, etc.

Summary or Highlights of Qualifications/Skills –

When listing skills, focus on those needed for the job you want, not what you have done in the past. Because resumes are skimmed, rather than read, highlighting these skills early in the resume is an effective way to increase your chances of getting an interview.

Work Experience –

List the job title, employer name and location, along with dates of employment. Underneath each job, briefly describe skills acquired. This can be done by bullet pointing each individual skill or job duty.

Education –

Education and Work Experience can be flip-flopped, depending on what you think your best selling point is. If you are a recent graduate, your education should go before your work experience. But if the employer is requiring experience and no education level, then work experience comes first. List only education that is significant to your job search. There is no need to list a high school diploma if you have a college degree. If you have a GED, list yourself as a high school graduate.

Other Activities –

List only those activities that relate to your occupational goal and show skill or experience. It is best not to list political or religious affiliations. Military experience can be listed as a separate section or as part of the work history. Ideas of things to list are volunteer experience, other languages spoken, honors and awards, etc.



Resume Writing Tips

- Use only 8 ½" by 11" white or off-white quality paper
- Use standard 1" margins
- Keep all section titles pulled to the left side of the paper
- Do not use abbreviations
- Avoid unusual or exotic fonts
- Use font changes, underlining, *italics*, CAPS and **bold** options sparingly
- Do not right justify
- Do not include photographs or graphics
- Keep the resume 1 to 2 pages
- Check for proper grammar and correct spelling

OOPS!

Common Resume Blunders

- Using pronouns like "I" and "me" and too many articles like "a" or "the"
- Adding a "Hobbies" section unless it is directly related to the job you are seeking
- Listing age, gender, race, ethnicity or religion
- General Objective Statement
- Typos

Scannable Resumes

Some companies use an electronic scanner to filter through the resumes received for each position. The computer scans your resume looking for keywords (such as degree held or software familiar with), as well as the requirements from the job listing. Your resume is easiest read by a computer if it is in 12-point size font and in Times New Roman or Arial. Using graphics, borders or other fonts and sizes will blur the letters together, causing computer chaos. Remember that length is irrelevant to a computer. So add in everything you think may help get your resume pulled. To make your resume easier to scan for a computer, there are some changes you can make.

Tips for Scannable Resumes

- Use keywords and short phrases, including industry-specific terms.
- Begin every line on the left margin. Do not right justify.
- Include a "Keyword Section" and list any and all skills, experience, etc. that apply to the job.
- Remove bullets, italics, underlines, etc. You can use an asterick * to bullet.
- Insert hard returns at the end of each line. Lines must not be more than 66 characters.
- Print using a laser printer. Do not use a dot matrix printer or photocopy your resume, which will be too poor of a quality for a computer to scan.

Tips for Emailing Resumes

Some employers may ask you to email your resume. There are few tips to keep in mind when emailing:

- Use the job title and/or job code in the “Subject” line of your email.
- Send your resume as an attachment.
- Save your resume with your name as the

filename, i.e. “johndoeresume.doc,” rather than “resume.doc.” This will help to distinguish your resume from others.

- In the body of the email provide an alternate contact method, just in case they are unable to open your attachment.
- Email a friend a copy of your resume to see how it looks over another computer.
- Run a virus check over your document prior to sending. Nothing will hurt your chances more than infecting the potential employer’s computer with a virus.

On the Web

<http://www.rileyguide.com/letters.html>

<http://resume.monster.com/archives/dosanddents/>



References

by Tara Connolly

References are a tool an employer uses to find out, from those who know you personally, what type of an employee you will be. References are used in several ways: to verify your work history, find out about your skills, communication abilities and work habits.

Tips

- Contact your references in advance and ask them if they would be willing to be a reference. Only use them if they sound very willing to do it.
- Contact only those people who will say good things about you and are familiar with your character, work habits and are themselves good employees (or employers).
- Refresh their memories regarding the position you held or the activity you were involved in. It is also a good idea to give them a copy of your resume, so they can see what you are telling the employer.
- The phrase, “References available upon request” is not necessary to put on your resume.
- Do not provide references until asked. And keep them separate from your resume.



Cover Letters

by **Tara Connolly**

Any time a resume is sent, it should be accompanied by a cover letter. Just like resumes, cover letters need to be tailored for each specific situation. Write a different letter for each job you apply for.

A cover letter is a one-page, three-paragraph letter introducing yourself to the

employer. Use the same font size and paper that you used on your resume. Be sure to type your signature and then sign in blue or black ink at the bottom of the letter. A guide to writing each paragraph is as follows:

1st Paragraph: State the reason you are writing and how you found out about the job. Be sure to include the job title or job code in this paragraph.

2nd Paragraph: Describe your strongest qualifications. It is best if the qualifications you are describing are the ones that are asked for as job requirements. If you did not put the objective statement in your resume, you can use it here. Be sure to focus on what you can do for the company, not what they can do for you.

3rd Paragraph: Close with the next step you will take. Will you call them? Follow up by email? Then thank the person reviewing your letter for their time and consideration.

On the Web

<http://resume.monster.com/archives/coverletter/>

<http://www.careerlab.com/letters/intro14.htm>